Department of Economic and Community Development State Historic Preservation Office

CONNECTICUT STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts to the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places (C.G.S. Chapter 184b, Sec. 10-409(2). See instructions in *How to Complete the Connecticut State Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property				
historic name Northfield Ceme	etery			
other names/site number Old	l North Field, Northfield Bu	urying Ground, North Stree	et Cemetery	
2. Location				
street & number 106 North Str	reet			
city or town Stamford		v	ricinity	
county Fairfield	zip code		N/A not for cation	
3. State Agency Certificati	ion			
I hereby certify that this nomination				
4. Classification				
4. Classification				
Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resourc		
(Check as many boxes as apply)	(Check only one box)	(Do not include previ	iously listed resources in cou	nt.)
private	building(s)	Contributing	Non-Contributing	
public-local	district			
public-state	\boxtimes site	0	0	buildings
public-federal	structure	1	0	sites
		0	0	structures
		1	1	objects
Property Owner		2 Contributing	1 Non-Contributing	Total
name First Congregational Church				
address 1 Walton Place				
city Stamford	state code CT			
zip code 06901 phone 20	03-323-0200			
I				

Northfield Cemetery	Stamford, Fairfield County
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5 Historic December Commel	
5. Historic Preservation Council	
Approval date	
Comments	
6. Function or Use	
Historic Functions	Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)	(Enter categories from instructions)
FUNERARY/Cemetery (ca. 1789-1964)	RECREATION/Monuments
RECREATION/Monuments (ca. 1789-Present)	
7. Description	
Architectural/Archaeological Classification	Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)	(Enter categories from instructions)
COLONIAL/New England Colonial	foundation N/A
EARLY REPUBLIC/Early Classical Revival	walls STONE: Fieldstone
MID-19 TH CENTURY/Gothic Revival	
	roof N/A
	other STONE: Granite; Sandstone; Marble; Slate

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

8. Statement of Significance	
Applicable Connecticut Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for State Register listing.)	Levels of Significance (local, state) LOCAL
	-
☐ 1 That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to our history and lives of persons significant in our past; or	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
	SOCIAL HISTORY
☐ 2 That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or	
☐ 3 That have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.	
Significant Dates 1745 (Date of earliest monument)	
1789 (Death of Abraham Davenport, property deeded to First Society)	· -
1861 (Dedication of Woodland Cemetery) 1964 (Date of most recent burial)	-
Significant Person	
Abraham Davenport	-
Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion 3 is marked) N/A	· -
	-
Architect/Builder Unknown	· -
Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)	

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property

1.50 acres

Municipal Map, Block and Lot Number and UTM Coordinate (If possible)

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

3

4

Zone Easting

See continuation sheet

Northing

Parcel Centroid

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The boundaries of the nominated property are consistent with the limits of the parcel currently owned by the First Congregational Church. This parcel is identified as Tax Map 115, Block 241, Lot 12 in the Stamford's assessment records and online data (http://scans.stamfordgis.org/TaxMap/taxmap2016_42x36_115.pdf)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

These boundaries are consistent with the boundaries of the property as described in the 1789 deed to the First Congregational Society, as indicated in a 1879 Stamford map (G. M. Hopkins), and in current assessment records. The extent of monumented burials, existing stone walls and fencing confirm the boundaries.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Scot	t Goodwin, Historian				
organization R.	Christopher Goodwin & Associates		date	07-01-2018	
street & number	241 East 4th Street, Suite 100		telephone	301-694-042	8
city or town Fr	rederick	state	MD	zip code	21701

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CTSRHP Nomination Form (March 2010)

Department of Economic and Community Development State Historic Preservation Office

CONNECTICUT STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM – Continuation Form

Narrative Description

Northfield Cemetery is an approximately 1.50-acre Early American town burying ground located at 106 North Street in Downtown Stamford. North Street and Franklin Street bound the cemetery to the south and west, respectively. Four properties with commercial or residential buildings and associated parking lots bound the cemetery to the north and east. A stone-masonry wall partially encloses the cemetery grounds fronting North and Franklin Streets, while a combination of chain-link and wooden fences describe its northern and eastern boundaries. The cemetery is accessible through cast- and wrought-iron gates along the masonry wall on both North and Franklin Streets. The grassy interior of Northfield Cemetery is characterized by irregular burial rows and family plots with grave markers in north-south alignment. A carriage path extending east from the entrance along Franklin Street visually divides the cemetery and its monuments. Monuments date from 1745 to 1964, and are made of slate, sandstone, marble, and granite. Common monument types include tablet markers, table tombs and obelisks, reflecting Colonial, Early American, Victorian, and twentieth-century approaches to funerary design. Additionally, the cemetery landscape is punctuated by mature deciduous and coniferous shade trees, as well as stone and iron burial-plot enclosures.

Setting

Northfield Cemetery is located in a mixed-use commercial and residential area of downtown Stamford approximately one half-mile north of Old Town Hall and .2 miles north of the Downtown Stamford Historic District, National Register listed in 1983 (Figure 1). The cemetery grounds are sited among dwellings, high-density residential buildings, and commercial buildings that date from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century (Figure 2). Although masonry walls, concrete sidewalks, and plantings along North and Franklin Streets distinguish the cemetery plot from its built surroundings to the south and west, multi-story commercial and residential construction visually frames the cemetery to the north and east (Photograph 1). Three large buildings along the grounds' northern edge are visible immediately from the North Street entrance: a ca. 1990 four-story building on raised piers located on Franklin Street; a ca. 2017 five-story condominium with inset balconies located on Summer Street; and a ca. 1985 office building with a reflective-glass façade, also on Summer Street (Photograph 2). A chain-link fence at the cemetery's eastern boundary separates the grounds from two parking areas associated with single-story commercial buildings constructed ca. 1980 and ca. 2017. Opposite the cemetery's masonry wall on the south side of North Street, a row of mid- and late nineteenth-century dwellings sit adjacent to a ca. 1970 high-density apartment building (Photograph 3). A ca. 1985 nine-story residential building is sited opposite the cemetery's western entrance on Franklin Street.

Situated among city blocks with similar high-density residential and commercial compositions, Northfield Cemetery is one of the largest continuous green spaces by acreage east of the Rippowam River in Downtown Stamford. Other nearby open and green spaces include the Mill River Park approximately .3 miles southwest of the cemetery and Scalzi Park approximately .25 miles northwest of the cemetery. The nearest neighboring cemetery is the St. John's and St. Andrew's Cemetery located at the rear of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church approximately .1 miles south of the Northfield Cemetery. The First Congregational Church, which retains the Northfield Cemetery grounds, is located one city block (approximately .2 miles) away at 1 Walton Place.

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Landscape

Northfield Cemetery lies on a rectangular plot that spans approximately 395 feet east-to-west along North Street, and 165 feet north-to-south along Franklin Street. The funerary landscape has an overarching linear arrangement, with a main pathway or alley, burial rows, and plantings all reflecting North Street's east-west alignment. The grassy interment area is characterized by irregular burial rows and family burial plots consisting of individual interments oriented along a north-south axis (Photograph 4). Despite a shared axial alignment, the cemetery's interred were not buried uniformly facing either north or the south as was typical of Colonial and Early American burial grounds. Although a majority of interments are southward facing, the direction of monument inscriptions, burial-row spacing, and existing headstone-footstone pairs indicate that both northward and southward orientations were utilized.

A wide and grassy pathway extends east from the western cemetery entrance on Franklin Street, dividing the grounds into northern and southern sections. The pathway, like the western entrance, is approximately 20 feet south of the true north-south center of the lot. As a result, the southern and northern sections are asymmetrical. The pathway is approximately 14 feet wide through the length of the cemetery, only narrowing slightly before being interrupted by a monument along the western boundary and terminating at a chain link fence (Photograph 5). The alley likely was used as a carriage path during the nineteenth century for transporting the deceased across the grounds to their final resting places. An 1879 map of Stamford depicts the pathway running the length of the cemetery. However, the age and arrangement of monuments at Northfield Cemetery suggests that it remained a feature of the landscape through much of the nineteenth century; it is the cemetery's sole circulation route.

North of the alley and in the western portion of the cemetery, older graves are scattered or arranged in long burial rows. However, a family burial-plot plan, which post-dates the cemetery's establishment, also can be discerned in some areas of the grounds (Photograph 6). Local historian Andrew Melillo, who mapped the cemetery's burial plots through archival research and visual investigation, recently illuminated the extent of this burial pattern (Figure 3).² Plots are most readily discernable in the southern and eastern portions of the cemetery, where a majority of memorials date to the second half of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. In certain cases, groupings of monuments with similar designs and spacing, or inscribed family names and dates, reveal family plots. However, monuments that have been relocated over time may obscure the boundaries. As a result, the most recognizable indicators of a family-plot plan at Northfield Cemetery consist of nineteenth-century stone and iron enclosures. Most enclosures are low to the ground (approximately 2 feet high); they are composed of granite posts with one or two tiers of inset iron railings (Photograph 7). In many cases, enclosure rails have been removed and only stone posts remain. At least one wrought-iron fence enclosure remains partially intact in the northwestern section of the cemetery (Photograph 8).

In addition to burial plot enclosures, the Northfield Cemetery landscape also is punctuated by deciduous and coniferous shade trees, primarily at the cemetery's boundary and along its main alley. The largest and oldest trees are located along the southern cemetery wall at North Street and along the edges of the carriage path. Tree types include maple, oak and cedar. The cemetery also includes three-placards describing the cemetery's role in Stamford history. A bronze commemoration plaque installed in 1976 by the Kiwanis Club and the Stamford Historical Society is located inside the cemetery's southern entrance, and two freestanding signs installed during the last decade provide similar information at both the Franklin and North Street entrances.

The cemetery is bounded to the south and east along Franklin and North Streets by a fieldstone masonry wall. The boundary wall stands approximately 4 feet high (Photograph 9). Along North Street, a wrought-iron gate provides access to the cemetery through the masonry wall (Photograph 10). Along Franklin Street, the masonry wall features a set of convex curves terminating at a cast- and wrought-iron double gate, which provides entrance to the cemetery's main alley (Photograph 11). No sources have been identified indicating the year of the masonry wall's construction.

¹ G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Stamford and Environs, 1897 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: G.M. Hopkins, CE, 1879), C.

² Andrew Melillo, Northfield Cemetery: History & Name Directory, Stamford Historical Society Collection, Cemeteries Vertical File.

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Monuments and Markers

Grave Markers of the Colonial Period (1745-1776)

Out of the cemetery's approximately 535 total monuments, Northfield Cemetery contains approximately 10 monuments that date to the Colonial Period. The Colonial Period at the cemetery extends from 1745, the date of the earliest legible monument, to 1776, the beginning of the Early American Period. Although it remains unclear if any burials on cemetery grounds pre-date its 1789 conveyance for use as a burying ground, it is likely that all monuments dating to this early period were relocated to Northfield Cemetery during the early nineteenth century. Most were relocated around 1806 when Route 1 was expanded through the town's Colonial burial ground, formerly located at the present site of Columbus Park at Washington Street, Main Street, and Park Place.³ Monuments from this period consist of a portal-shaped tablets made either of sandstone (also called brownstone) or slate, often with an accompanying footstone. Tablets had single-arched or tripartite silhouettes (ex. a central single arch, with two rounded shoulders. The tablet face was inscribed with a name, date of death, and occasionally an epitaph. The central-arch lunette, or tympanum, is often ornamented with a winged-head or skull(also called a "soul-effigy") motif. Engraved border and finial ornamentation includes scrollwork, vines, florets, or other funerary symbols.

The earliest Colonial monument in the cemetery is the Sarah Davenport (1745) tablet. This tripartite sandstone tablet features a crowned soul-effigy motif with vine border ornamentation (Photograph 12). The stone's design and production can be attributed to the Connecticut Valley gravestone carver and funerary artist Thomas Johnson II.⁴ A second sandstone marker carved by Johnson is immediately adjacent to the Sarah Davenport tablet: the Nathan Davenport (1747) stone commemorates the husband of Sarah and the son of John Davenport. Other Colonial Period markers are located along the northern boundary of the cemetery. The Theodosia Lloyd (1749) headstone is a tripartite monument in slate with an elaborate soul-effigy motif, border ornamentation, and lengthy epitaphic text (Photograph 13). The central winged-head motif was carved in relief, and features hair and feathered-wing details. A floral and vine pattern ornaments the tablet's borders, with seashells in the shoulders. Immediately east of the Theodosia Lloyd marker is another slate stone from the late Colonial Period featuring a winged-head motif and scrolling vine ornamentation: the Abigail Woolfey (1771) tablet. Both of these markers are representative of the Boston School style of headstone carving, the preeminent style of funerary art in New England through much of the Colonial Period, executed by skilled artisans in the Province of Massachusetts Bay.⁵ Other slate and sandstone markers from this period are found throughout the cemetery, but many are severely weathered or damaged.

Early-American Monuments (1776-1830)

Monuments from the Early American Period date from 1776 until the start of the Victorian Period in 1830, and reflect prevailing trends in art and architecture including the rise of Neoclassicism and Romanticism. There are approximately 130 Early American monuments in the cemetery. This period saw the emergence of marble in monument making, in addition to new monument forms like the obelisk. Ornaments inspired by the Greek-Revival style, like columns and pediments, also became common. In Northfield Cemetery, Early American monuments are made of sandstone, marble, and granite. Their forms include tablets, table tombs, and obelisks. Tablet makers are made of sandstone or marble, and their shapes frequently are tripartite like Colonial tablets. However, new tablet shapes inspired by Classical architecture also emerged during the period: tablets with multipartite, squared, and pedimented silhouettes are all common in the cemetery. Tablet inscriptions

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³ Daily Advocate, Stamford, "1806: Connecticut Turnpike Co.," May 15, 1991, 7.

⁴ Ernest Caulfield, "Connecticut Gravestones Articles by Dr. Ernest J. Caulfield," *Markers: The Annual Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* 8 (1991): 1-338.

⁵ Peter Benes, *The Masks of Orthodoxy: Folk Gravestone Carving in Plymouth County, Massachusetts, 1689-1805* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977).

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feature looped and italic lettering with swashes, often employed in tandem with other serif lettering styles on a single tablet. In certain cases, winged-head motifs appear on Early American monuments; but this period saw the decline of the soul effigy and the rise of the urn-and-willow motif, a funerary symbol that reflected Neoclassicism and Romantic cultural sentiments.

The Ebenezer Weed (1790) stone is an example of an Early American sandstone tablet at Northfield Cemetery. That stone has a tripartite shape with no central motif, and bears an inscription that employs both looped script and serif lettering. The Hannah Weid (1797) tablet, which commemorates the wife of Ebenezer, employs similar inscriptive variety, but features a Neoclassical multipartite silhouette (Photograph 14). The Silas and Mary Davenport (1795) stone is an eighteenth-century example of a simple tablet marker made of marble, which became popular around the turn of the century (Photograph 15). Some early nineteenth-century marble tablets feature ornamentation reflecting the rise of Neoclassicism. One exceptional example is the Theodosia Davenport (1810) stone, a large marble tablet with a multipartite shape, a large central motif, and a bordered inscription panel with a lengthy epitaphic inscription (Photograph 16). An obelisk and an arched tree are engraved within the tablet's central arch, which itself is rendered as an architectural ornament through the placement of two Classical columns of the Ionic order at the base of the lunette. Wave-like scrollwork extends outwards from below the columns to the edges of the tablet. The monument's design employs Romantic imagery and features both Greek- and Egyptian-Revival-style decorative elements. Beyond tablet markers, Neoclassical obelisks dating from the Early American period also are found throughout the cemetery. Those monuments are made of marble or granite and comprised of an obelisk atop a square pedestal.

Another notable Early American monument is the marble table tomb located in the northwestern section of the cemetery adjacent to the Theodosia Davenport (1810) tablet. Although the inscription has weathered away, it is thought that the monument belongs to Abraham Davenport, the esteemed Stamford resident who deeded the cemetery plot to the First Society (the First Congregational Church) for use as a burial ground upon his death in 1789. Indeed, both its form (table-tombs typically commemorated the wealthy because they employ large amounts of stone) and design character suggest that the monument memorializes a person of social and economic standing. The table tomb is composed of a large rectangular slab on three piers, two of which are pairs of mock balusters carved from a single slab of stone. Motifs are carved in relief between balusters on either side of the monument: the northern facing motif is a soul effigy and a horizontal hourglass; the southern facing motif is a Neoclassical urn (Photograph 17 & Photograph 18). This pairing of both religious and Romantic funerary symbols on a single monument is uncommon; but the combined design encapsulates a significant stylistic transition underway in the decades before the turn of the nineteenth century.

Victorian-Period Monuments (1830-1900)

There are approximately 370 Victorian-Period monuments in Northfield Cemetery. Victorian monuments in the cemetery date from 1830 to 1900, and typically are made of marble or polished granite. Tablets and monuments with sculptural or architectural forms are the most common memorial forms. Monuments from the Early Victorian Period (1830-1850) reflect Romantic and Neoclassical cultural currents through the use of Greek and Egyptian Revival-style forms and ornaments as well as turn-of-the-century funerary imagery like the urn and the willow. Late Victorian Period (1850-1900) monuments often are sculptural and reflect a range of sentimental themes through the use of symbols and elaborate ornamentation. Markers that employ the Victorian language of flowers or other secular and religious symbols, like picture frames and lambs, are common. Many monuments also incorporate architectural elements inspired by the Gothic Revival style, including pointed arches, drip molding, and trefoil shapes. Inscriptions use raised lettering and incorporate a range of typographic styles. Additionally, tablets from the Late Victorian moment often incorporate more stone, and employ both thicker tablets and stone plinths to raise the monuments from the ground. Late Victorian monuments occasionally are large in scale and utilize other materials besides marble, like sandstone or polished granite. These monuments are architectural or sculptural, and combine formal and ornamental elements from across the Revival styles.

The Rebecca Almira (1841) stone is an example of a Victorian monument from the Early Victorian period found at Northfield Cemetery. The monument is a marble tablet with a wide, single-arched silhouette and a central motif depicting

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a weeping willow tree and an urn on a pedestal (Photograph 19). This monument is distinct from nineteenth-century Early-American tablets featuring an urn-and-willow motif: the Almira stone employs a picture-frame-like inset, and the image is carved in high relief. This detailed and high-relief carving style was common during the Victorian period. Other monuments like the Elisha Hawley (1819) and Electa Hawley (1849) monuments employ similar imagery and technique. Many Victorian monuments at the cemetery reflect the introduction of the Gothic-Revival style to funerary design around midcentury. The Sarah Mills (1849) stone employs a relief-cut Gothic arch to frame its inscription plate. The Peter and Polly Brown monument (1875) features sculptural drip molding, a pointed arch, raised inscriptive lettering and a set of finished plinths (Photograph 20). Other notable large-scale Victorian monuments include the Calhoun family (1847-1872) hexagonal obelisk, and the Rossborough family (1858-1915) monument (Photograph 6 and Photograph 21). The Rossborough monument is composed of faced and cylindrical pedestals, with a steeple-like obelisk; upper portions of the monument currently are separated from its base, and other sculptural elements appear to have been lost, as well.

Twentieth Century Monuments (1900-1964)

There are approximately 40 twentieth-century monuments in the cemetery. During the last two decades of the nineteenth-century, polished granite was introduced as a monument material. During the twentieth century, polished and unfinished granite became the most popular memorial material, as can be seen in Northfield Cemetery. Funerary designers from this period utilized larger quantities of stone for standard-sized monuments than during any prior period. Additionally, gravestones are relatively unornamented, contrasting with the Late Victorian approach. Markers often are thick and rectangular or feature a wide single-arched silhouette, and are raised on plinths. Plinths and the sides of granite monuments may be left unfinished. Textual inscriptions used simple serif or sans-serif lettering. Other granite monuments may be flush with the ground. Monuments that employ marble or other materials from this period also are found in the cemetery. In certain cases, monument designs from this period mimic designs from the Early American period or the Victorian period.

The Harvey and Eliza Lockwood (1884-1914) stone is an example of a polished granite memorial with a single-arched shape, a simple inscription and an unfinished granite plinth. The Finch family (1882) is another polished granite stone with unfinished sides and plinth (Photograph 22). The Ida Mae Barnes Vossler monument (1964) is a collection of three memorials, which appear to have been placed at the site at different points in time: a polished and unfinished granite stone, a crude wooden cross and a metal marker bearing the name of a funeral home represent a range of twentieth-century grave-marking approaches, including those ad-hoc and permanent (Photograph 23). It is likely that the funeral home marker and the wooden marker served as placeholders prior to the erection of the stone maker, but were left in place after its addition.

Integrity

Northfield Cemetery retains its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although the cemetery's historical setting has been affected by recent and large-scale development, the interior landscape as well as the site's southern and western exterior boundaries successfully convey the feeling of an Early American cemetery. Moreover, the cemetery is still used for art viewing, remembrance, and commemoration, indicating that the site retains its integrity of association. Fundamental aspects of the cemetery's landscape, like its burial and circulation patterns, remain intact. Other landscape features, like the stone-masonry exterior walls and stone and iron family-plot enclosures, have been repaired or partially removed, respectively; however, their original design intent, materials, and function are conveyed despite their current condition, and successfully reflect nineteenth-century trends in cemetery design.

Northfield Cemetery's collection of monuments also retains its integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship, despite instances of weathering, vandalism, and relocation. Most markers from the Colonial, Early American, and Victorian periods convey their original design intent and reflect period-specific trends in the production of funerary art. However, many of the earliest brownstone grave markers (approximately 1750-1800) have experienced significant scaling, flaking, and spalling, which has rendered their inscriptions and ornamental engravings illegible (Photograph 24). Late eighteenth-and nineteenth-century marble monuments also have undergone weathering including erosion and sugaring, causing the

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recession of relief motifs and textual inscriptions. Similarly, the inscriptions of granite table tombs and slabs have weathered. Slate and polished granite stones typically are unaffected.

Vandalism also has damaged a number of markers at the cemetery. Some granite and marble obelisk monuments from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have been knocked off their pedestals (Photograph 25). Other stones have been split into pieces by force or by natural causes, sunken into the ground, or have fallen from their original vertical position. In recent years, a cemetery restoration initiative has undertaken the cleaning and repair of numerous monuments, including resetting and stabilization of headstones. Recent marker surveys have revealed that approximately 60 monuments have been lost during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁶ While many of those stones were relocated to other burial spaces, others are missing. Because approximately 535 monuments remain at the site, and because markers from no one historical period have been disproportionately affected, Northfield Cemetery's monuments retain their integrity of location.

⁶ Melillo, *Northfield Cemetery*.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Northfield Cemetery is significant under Criterion 1 at the local level as a reflection of a significant moment in Stamford's social history associated with Post-Revolution town development, and with institutions central to its Colonial and Early American history. Its historical narrative, its landscape, and its monuments all reflect social and institutional secularization during early years of American civil society. Moreover, as a reflection of evolving burial practices, the site represents a paradigmatic administrative approach to organized interment. Because Stamford's original Colonial Era town burying ground was destroyed in 1805, Northfield Cemetery derives historical significance from its status as the city's sole remaining eighteenth-century town cemetery organized for public use in the Colonial fashion.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, communities across Connecticut began to turn away from the established Congregationalist system of social order, whereby matters of public concern were decided through a town's founding religious body. Secular institutions forged in the Post-Revolution Era superseded religious authority on matters of local governance and community infrastructure, and became the backbone of civil society in the years of the Early Republic. The important history of Congregationalism's decline and the rise of a secular social order is reflected in the landscape of Connecticut's Early American town cemeteries, liminal spaces at the border of religious practice and public works. This especially is the case at Northfield Cemetery in Stamford, a cemetery that functioned as that town's common burying ground through the critical period of social and institutional secularization. Although the cemetery was deeded to the First Congregational Society in 1789, the period of significance for Northfield Cemetery extends from 1745, the date of the earliest monument at the site, to 1861, the date that the Woodland Cemetery was opened in Stamford's South End, replacing Northfield Cemetery as Stamford's common burial space. Approximately 370 of the cemetery's 535 monuments date from the period of significance. Contributing resources at the cemetery include one site – the grounds, including its burial arrangements and landscape – and one object, the collection of monuments dating from 1745 to 1861. The collection of monuments dating from 1862 to 1964 is counted as a non-contributing object.

Criterion 1: Social History - Burial Practices as a Reflection of Town Development (1789-1861)

The Cemetery and the Church

A WPA-era survey of Connecticut cemeteries directed by Charles R. Hale revealed in 1934 that Stamford is home to more than 56 burial spaces, many of which date to the Colonial Period and the days of the Early Republic. Most are located north of Downtown Stamford in what were rural farmlands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They typically consist of small family burying grounds with less than 30 interments.⁷ As was the case in Stamford, the family burying ground was the most common interment model across Connecticut during the Colonial and Early American Periods. But a larger common burying ground typically served each town or village. As an important element of community infrastructure, the Colonial town burying ground fell under the purview the local government – and for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the governing body was indistinguishable from the religious congregation. In Stamford, landed residents conducted community business through the auspices of the congregation, also called the First Society after 1731 and the First Congregational Church after 1907, including the selection of ministers, the division and appropriation of land, and the development of infrastructure, like public roads. As a land and infrastructure matter, the congregation orchestrated the selection of Stamford's common burial spaces. But the relationship between sepulchral space and the congregation also was inherent: the deep religiosity surrounding matters of death during the Puritan and Colonial Periods meant that a common burial ground necessarily was tied to the spiritual life of the town.⁸

⁷ Charles R. Hale Collection of Headstone Inscriptions, "North Street Cemetery," 1934 (Connecticut State Library Collection), Vol. 46: 29-49.

⁸ John R. Stilgoe, Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983).

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In this regard, Stamford's early town burying grounds reflected both the administrative and religious approaches of the Colonial congregation. The first known record of the First Society's engagement with the question of a public burial space dates to 1747, although it can be assumed that common sites of sepulcher existed in Stamford before that date. In a meeting of the First Society on Dec. 24, 1747, a committee consisting of four town residents, including one Abraham Davenport, was appointed "to seek a proper place for a burying ground and purchase it at the society's charge." Although no documents have been identified confirming the result of that committee's effort, it is thought that the chosen location was the present site of Columbus Park at Main Street, Washington Street, and Park Place. The town burial ground located there (also called the Old Stamford Burying Ground) is known to have served the town through the Revolutionary War and until the close of the nineteenth century, when the role of common burying ground was assumed by Northfield Cemetery. By the time the new town cemetery emerged, both the role of the church in public administration and the religious composition of Stamford had changed due to a series of historical developments. Just as had been the case during the Colonial Period, Northfield Cemetery reflected its contemporary administrative and religious context, even as it was filled.

Around the time that the first burial ground committee was convened in 1747 and in the decades that followed, Stamford underwent important social and institutional changes that directly impacted the relationship between the church and burial space. The most readily apparent was an increase in town size. Historians have estimated that the population increased from about 585 in 1701 to 2,420 at the time of the 1754 census. Moreover, the population nearly doubled during the two decades 1735 to 1754 alone. Population increase inspired the First Society to undertake new infrastructural projects like the establishment of a common burial ground. But growth also brought about fundamental changes to the local social order. In 1740, amidst a population boom and changes to the ministry of the First Society, an Episcopal Church was organized within the town of Stamford, effectively ending the First Society's nearly three-quarters of a century of Congregational hegemony. While members of the Episcopal Church remained a religious minority through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, the new church's very presence highlighted the need for a system of town administration that spanned religious affiliations. To this purpose, a change to local governance – albeit nominal – was already underway.

Issues pertaining to the church and town had been resolved without distinction in congregation meetings for most of Stamford's Colonial history; but in 1732, the First Society formally organized as a separate entity. The result was a differentiation of the town meeting and the First Society meeting, as well as a division of responsibilities. While the First Society retained more institutional power than the town, including the administration of schools and the selection of ministers both as directed by statutes of the Connecticut Charter, the two bodies remained virtually indistinguishable until the time of the American Revolution. Indeed, from 1731 until 1760, the minutes of town meetings and meetings of the First Society both were kept in the same record book. Moreover, ranking members of the First Society held equivalent positions within the town for much of the century. Even though the Congregational approach remained largely intact, this administrative change was a harbinger of institutional secularization that would occur with greater force around the turn of the century.

One of the forces contributing to the dissimilation of the town and the church was Stamford's increasing participation in matters of regional governance through the formalized political structure of the Connecticut Colony. One individual in particular, Abraham Davenport, largely was responsible for this development. Abraham Davenport, son of Rev. John Davenport, the third pastor of the Congregational Church and great-grandson of Stamford Founder John Davenport, had begun his career as a surveyor of highways and ascended through numerous ranking positions in both the town and church meetings. In 1747, the same year that he was appointed to the First Society committee on selecting a new burying ground, he became the Moderator of the Stamford town meeting and was appointed as a Representative to the General Assembly of

⁹ E. B. Huntington, *History of Stamford: from its Settlement in 1641 to the Present Time* (Stamford, Connecticut: E.B. Huntington, 1858), 444-445.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Estelle F. Feinstein, *Stamford from Puritan to Patriot: The Shaping of a Connecticut Community, 1641-1774* (Stamford, Connecticut: Stamford Bicentennial Corp., 1976), 92.

¹² Feinstein, Stamford from Puritan to Patriot, 125.

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Connecticut. Davenport cultivated a high profile in Colonial politics while maintaining his role as a key decision-maker for both the church and the town in Stamford. But as tensions grew between the colonies and England in the 1760s and 1770s, and as town became more fragmented along religious lines, Davenport turned specifically to the town meeting to engage the local community in with inter- and intra-colony concerns pertaining to English dominance and potential American sovereignty.

As the historian Estelle Feinstein found, Davenport's resolve to defend both the colonial and local systems' self-governance against English incursions "transformed the town meeting as an institution from a mechanism which annually confirmed the same notables into... an instrument for the making of radical decisions."¹⁴ As the town meeting Moderator, Davenport had an essential role in mobilizing Stamford to the patriotic cause. But his work also effectively defined the town meeting in Stamford as the primary apparatus for political decision-making in the Post-Revolution Period. At the close of the war, Connecticut elected to continue operating under its Charter, reaffirming the official role of the Congregational Church as administrator in both state and local matters. But in Stamford, the elevation of the town meeting limited the scope of First Society authority to matters of religious concern. Religious matters, which included the selection and pay of ministers. included the administration of schools (a duty granted by Connecticut statute), and public burial space (a duty granted by assumed spiritual right). Those would remain under the purview of the First Society until the early nineteenth century, when institutional secularization further redefined the role of the congregation in civil society.

The Congregational Church, which resumed its official administrative role after the Revolution, also reassumed much of its former spiritual authority in Stamford in the last decades of the eighteenth century. This was due to a reinvigoration of the congregation during the war, stemming from a popular belief that Congregationalism reflected patriotic ideals, while Anglicanism (and thus the local Episcopal Church) represented British tyranny. ¹⁵ Abraham Davenport, for one, remained a firm believer in the First Society's religious leadership. Despite playing an essential role in establishing separate political and religious spheres in Stamford. Davenport was a deacon at the church from 1759 until his death in 1789, and saw the congregation as the rightful authority in matters of spiritual life. Importantly, Davenport expressed this belief upon his death in 1789 by deeding a one-acre tract of land to the First Society for use as a common burial ground. His will read: "I give and devise to said first society, One Square acre of land at the North West Corner of my land in the North field which I bought of Capt. Samuel Hait, to be to them a forever Burying place reserving to my Heirs the herbage thereof." This conveyance, understood within its historical context, was not a gift solely to the church, but a grant of public burial space to the town of Stamford through the auspices of the congregation.

In 1789, Northfield Cemetery became the second large burying ground in Stamford established through the First Society since 1747. Davenport, having contributed to the founding of the old burying ground, reaffirmed the Colonial town-cemetery model in the Early American Period through his last will and testament. Even though the church no longer was responsible for the division of land or for the development of most public infrastructure, it remained the officiator of religious spaces, including burial space. As a result, the principal premise of the Colonial town-cemetery model, that public land was the same as church land in the case of burial space, held true, and even was echoed Davenport's siting of Northfield Cemetery. The one-acre tract chosen for the burying ground was part of the old North Field, a shared planting ground used for agriculture by the congregation (and thus the Stamford community at large) during the early Colonial Period. It had been privatized along with other common land around the turn of the eighteenth century. By deeding a portion of Old North Field back to the congregation, Davenport symbolically returned it to the community for public use.

Northfield Cemetery was used in a manner similar to smaller burying grounds across Stamford during its first decade. Abraham Davenport was buried at the site, along with others who were interred in scattered arrangement or in burial rows,

¹³ J. Robert Bromley, Abraham Davenport: 1715-1789, A Study of the Man (Stamford, Connecticut: The Stamford Historical Society, BiCentennial Series, 1976).

¹⁴ Feinstein, Stamford from Puritan to Patriot, 197.

¹⁶ [Abraham Davenport's Last Will and Testament reproduced in] Bromley, Abraham Davenport, 52-53.

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the common interment pattern of the Colonial and Early American Periods. Despite its public function, the cemetery had not achieved the status of "town burying ground," since the Old Stamford Burying Ground remained the primary burial site for town residents. That changed in 1805 when the town elected to reroute Route 1 through the Old Burying Ground in an attempt to streamline a circuitous portion of the Post Road. Despite public opposition - by one account, community members used oxen to pull boulders onto the site to interfere with construction - the burial ground was decommissioned and bodies were relocated to other burying grounds in Stamford including Northfield Cemetery. ¹⁷ After that incident, burials took place with increasing frequency at Northfield Cemetery. Indeed, as the sole burying ground officiated by the Congregational Church, it had assumed the role of "town cemetery." But as Stamford grew more religiously diverse in the coming decades, and as the social order continued to secularize, the role of Northfield Cemetery shifted.

At the turn of the century, a new model for town cemeteries was developed in New Haven that reflected the spirit of the times. That model, embodied in Grove Street Cemetery (New Haven Burying Ground) founded in 1797, was defined both by its institutional structure and its design. The New Haven Burying Ground was the first incorporated town cemetery in America. It was a secular institution unaffiliated with a congregation or a church, and it also sold interment space instead of providing it as a public service. At Grove Street Cemetery, burial space was divided into parcels prior to infilling, resulting in a gridded family plot plan. This design was unlike its historical antecedent, the Colonial town cemetery, where planning for family adjacency was secondary to convenience and necessity. The family plot plan not only allowed for long-term familial adjacency, but it also permitted the acquisition of choice lots within the sepulchral landscape, often for a higher price. After the turn of the century, existing cemeteries frequently instituted a family-plot plan because it was both an efficient use of space and means of generating revenue.

The First Congregational Society adopted aspects of the New Haven model for Northfield Cemetery during the nineteenth century. After a period of public interment in Colonial fashion, it divided portions of Northfield Cemetery into family burial plots and sold them to town residents. While the historical record is unclear as to the initial date of the cemetery's division or the date of its first plot sale, deeds for cemetery plots are recorded in city records from 1841 to 1915. Plots were sold for ten dollars by Theodore Davenport, the son of Abraham Davenport, and others for the First Congregational Society, and between 1841 and 1859, twenty-two individuals bought plots. The division of the grounds likely corresponded to the establishment of the cemetery's main carriage path as a permanent landscape feature. After years of interment and management in the Colonial fashion, the First Congregational Society's appropriation of the New Haven model for structuring and managing its own burying grounds was an indication that the old town-cemetery model, defined by an idea of church-space-as-public-space, no longer was viable in a period of institutional secularization and diversification within the local religious community.

Another factor challenged the commonly held notions that Northfield Cemetery had become the de-facto town cemetery following the destruction of the Old Town Burying Ground, and that the First Congregational Church was the de-facto arbiter of public burial space. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Episcopal Church opened its own burying ground one city block away from Northfield Cemetery. Based on that cemetery's plan, it appears to have implemented a New Haven Burying Ground family-plot structure from its opening, separating itself historically from the Colonial towncemetery model utilized by the Congregational Church. Because the Episcopal Church remained deflated for a time after the Revolution, it is likely that those outside of the Anglican community did not use the burial space in its early years. But the division of burial space by religious affiliation reinforced the idea that Northfield Cemetery belonged not to the town as a whole, but to the church and its members. Moreover, in 1818, the first Constitution of the State of Connecticut disestablished the Congregational Church at the state level. Although the Constitution had no specific bearing on burial practices, it marked an official end to the old Congregationalist order within the new constitutional system.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Stamford residents were inspired by the Rural Cemetery Movement to build a new kind of cemetery that would be used by the entire local community. The Rural Cemetery Movement, a trend of establishing large

¹⁷ Daily Advocate, 1991.

¹⁸ Jeanne Majdalany, *Northfield Cemetery*, 1981 [letter], Stamford Historical Society Collection, Cemeteries Vertical File.

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park-like cemeteries for both sepulchral and recreational purposes, began at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge in 1831 and spread across American cities during the 1840s and 1850s. At its core, the rural cemetery was a new kind of secular American institution that was part park, part art museum, and part burial ground. In Connecticut and throughout New England, a town rural cemetery was viewed as a symbol of regional status and prosperity. Stamford, which officially had organized as a town in 1801 and was developing a regionally significant industrial economy, became a regular stop on the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad in 1848. In 1856, a group of Stamford businessmen including Theodore Davenport incorporated an association for the purpose of constructing Stamford's own rural cemetery. That association purchased forty acres in the Rocky Neck area and enlisted the engineer and landscape designer B. F. Hathaway to lay out what became Woodland Cemetery. A formal dedication of the new rural cemetery took place in 1861. At the dedication, at least eight reverends from different Stamford churches offered orations: the First Congregational Church, the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, the Universalist Church, and the Presbyterian Church all were represented.

The dedication of Woodland Cemetery not only marked the end of Northfield Cemetery's tenure as a Stamford's town cemetery, but also the end of the Colonial town-cemetery model. For the first time in Stamford's history, a secular institution was the officiator of community burial space. The incorporated structure of the new town cemetery proved that a single religious body no longer could rightfully claim to be the administrator of public space. As the participation of Stamford's faith leaders indicated, the community at large found the secular institution to be an appropriate administrator even of public space tied to spiritual practice. That moment marked the end of a transitional period in Stamford's institutional and funerary history, throughout which Northfield Cemetery played a significant role. Although the cemetery continued to operate into the twentieth century much as it had during the first half of the nineteenth century, use slowed after the opening of Woodland Cemetery. Many of the burials that took place during the last decades of the nineteenth century were relatives of those already interred there. The most recent burial was in 1964.

Monuments and the Secularization of Death

Northfield Cemetery's physical landscape, and specifically its burial patterns, reflects the institutional secularization central to its history; but its monuments also reflect a coterminous process of social secularization that occurred from the Colonial Period into the Victorian Period. That process of social secularization is most readily apparent when comparing Colonial and Early American monument designs.

Gravestones at Northfield Cemetery that pre-date the American Revolution express religious beliefs (or religious sentiments²¹) that were common across Connecticut congregations in their form and ornamentation. The basic shape and vertical orientation of tablet markers are thought to be two such expressions. Historians have argued that single-arched and tripartite monuments were set vertically into the ground to create a portal- or doorway-like silhouette, symbolizing a passage between worlds, and that the pervasive implementation of this symbolic design signifies common belief in the ascendance of the soul. The soul-effigy motif that adorns the tympanum of most Colonial tablets further defines this belief. A winged head on a portal-shaped tablet represents a soul in mediate form as it moves between this world and the afterlife. In certain cases, additional ornamentation may specify further a belief in the ascension of the soul: the crown that appears above the soul effigy on the monuments to Sarah Davenport (1745) and Nathan Davenport (1745), for example, is thought to represent the Crown of Righteousness, or the "Crown of Glory," a New Testament symbol pertaining to the resurrection of Christ.²² The religious symbolism found in the design and ornamentation of gravestones from the Colonial periods, therefore, is

¹⁹ Stanley French, "The Cemetery As Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery Movement," *American Quarterly* 26:1 (1974): 37-59.

²¹ David D. Hall, "The Gravestone Image as A Puritan Cultural Code," in *Puritan Gravestone Art, Volume I of The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife: Annual Proceedings* (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University Press, 1976).

²⁰ Huntington, *History of Stamford*, 446-447.

²² Allan I. Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its* Symbols, 1650-1815 (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), 128.

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indicative of a religiosity surrounding death that persisted through the Colonial Period until first decades of the Early American period.

Following the Revolution, new designs began to replace the tripartite soul-effigy tablet throughout New England. Most Early American gravestones in Northfield Cemetery bear simple textual inscriptions alone or are ornamented with an urn-and-willow motif. In many cases, the tripartite silhouette was replaced by a Neoclassical shape reminiscent of architecture from antiquity. Historians and archeologists have pointed to those emergent designs as indications of secularization and changing attitudes towards death, which occurred simultaneously with the rise of Romanticism and Neoclassicism in popular culture.²³ For instance, Early American tablets bearing only textual inscriptions suggest a turn away from religious symbolism. A new symbolism, the urn-and-willow motif that became common around 1790, is thought to be indicative of a cultural repositioning associated with secularism as well as trends in literature and architecture.²⁴ Early Americans increasingly rejected visions of death as an inevitable journey towards heaven or hell, and instead associated death with sleep and the afterlife and with Acadian landscapes, as evidenced by the growing popularity of the term "cemetery" from the Greek "koimeterion," meaning place of sleep. Coterminously, Romantic sentiments transformed the social role of mortuary monuments: while Colonial funerary artists had designed monuments as warnings to the living about the inevitability of death, Early Americans saw monuments as sites for mourning and reflection. The willow represented the natural melancholic, while the urn, an object of antiquity, symbolized memory historicized. This is the case also for Neoclassical tablet silhouettes, or for Neoclassical monuments, like obelisks, that abandoned the tablet form altogether.²⁵

Given this historical dynamic, one of the most interesting monuments in the cemetery, the table tomb likely belonging to Abraham Davenport, is emblematic of the transition between religious and secular funerary designs. The stone table tomb, which features a soul-effigy symbol on its northward facing pier and an urn motif on its southward facing pier, is an uncommon example of a monument containing both Colonial and Romantic symbolism. Given that Davenport died in 1789 as the urn-and-willow motif was becoming common to cemeteries across Connecticut, the stone simply may reflect stylistic change taking place at the time. However, when symbolism and personal history both are taken into account, the monument's design takes on new meaning. As seen through the history of Northfield Cemetery, Abraham Davenport was at once a firmly religious Congregationalist and a catalyst in the development of a secular political sphere in Stamford. His work as both a reverend and a politician, and as a ranking member of the First Society and the town meeting, indicates that he served as a bridge between the Colonial social order and the emerging American project. In this regard, the paired motifs illustrate the symbiosis of philosophies apparent in his life's work; they also represent Davenport's role in Stamford's social and institutional development at a significant moment of change.

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²³ J. F. Deetz and E. S. Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow" in *Natural History* 76:3 (1967), 29-37.

²⁴ Blanche M.G. Linden, "The Willow Tree and Urn Motif," in *Markers: The Annual Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* 1 (1980): 148-155.

²⁵ Peggy McDowell and Richard E. Meyer, *The Revival Styles in American Memorial Art* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 18.

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GRAPHICS

Figure 1. Location Map showing boundaries of nominated property. Source: Google Maps. 2018. 250ft for 1 inch [map]. "Northfield Cemetery, North Street, Stamford CT." Accessed July 1, 2018.

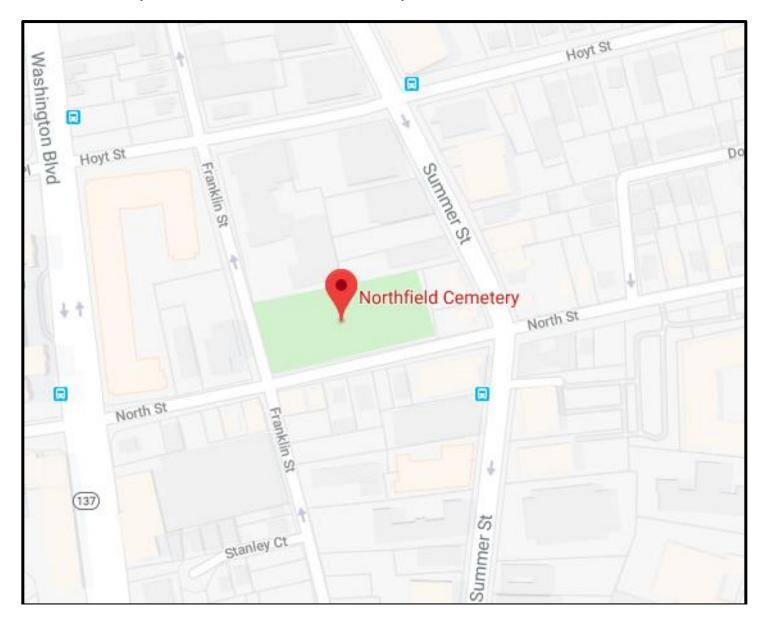


Figure 2. Site Plan showing satellite imagery of nominated property. Source: Google Earth. 2018. 250ft for 1 inch [map]. "Northfield Cemetery, North Street, Stamford CT." Accessed July 1, 2018.

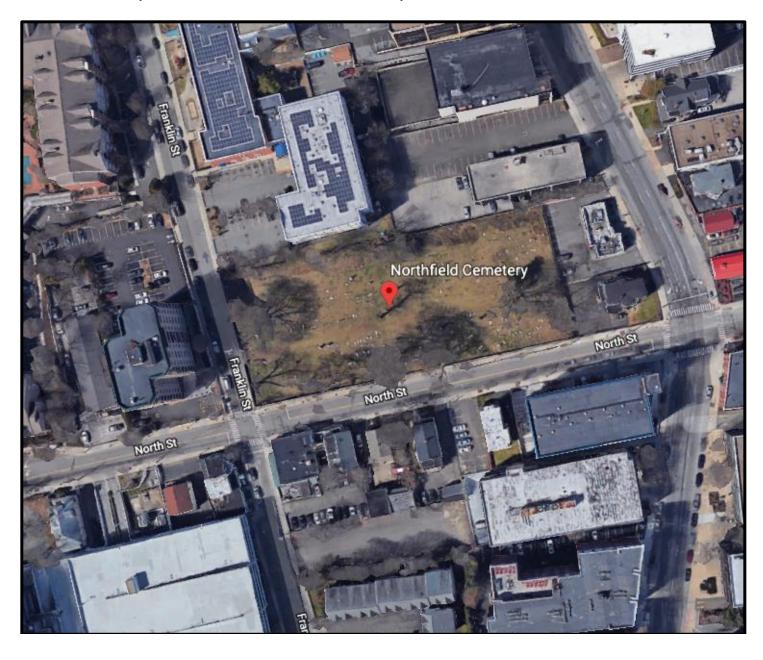
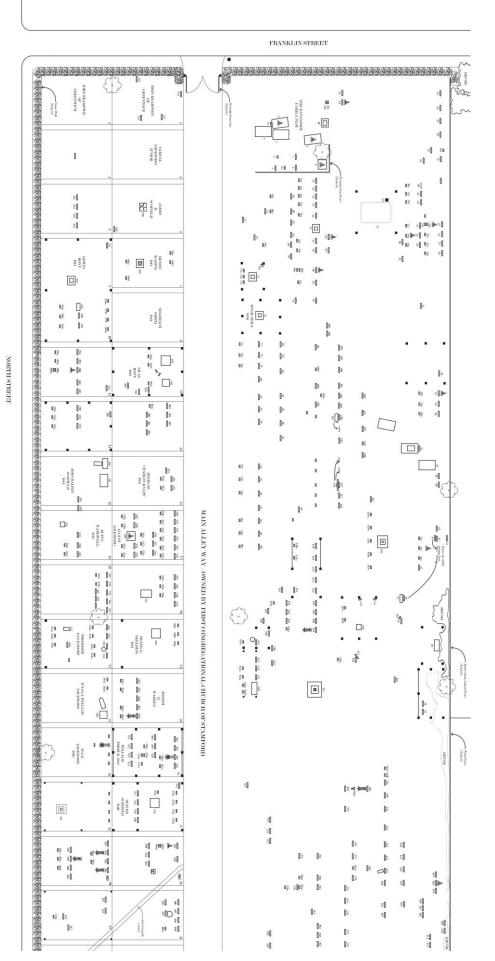


Figure 3. Map of Northfield Cemetery, its monuments, and burial plots, by local historian Andrew R. Melillo, 2015.





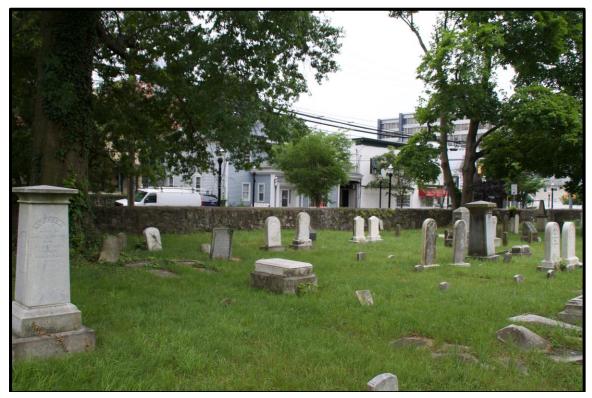
Photographs 1-25:



Photograph 1 of 25: View of northern Northfield Cemetery, facing northeast



Photograph 2 of 25: Residential and commercial buildings along northern boundary, facing northeast



Photograph 3 of 25: View of cemetery at southwestern boundary along North Street, facing southwest



Photograph 4 of 25: Burial rows and scattered interments in the northwestern cemetery, facing northwest



Photograph 5 of 25: Main alley, likely a nineteenth-century carriage path, facing east



Photograph 6 of 25: Burial plots, Calhoun family obelisk in foreground, facing northwest



Photograph 7 of 25: Partial stone and iron plot enclosure, facing south



Photograph 8 of 25: Iron fence in western cemetery, facing southeast



Photograph 9 of 25: Stone masonry wall along North Street, facing northeast



Photograph 10 of 25: North Street entrance and iron gate, facing northwest



Photograph 11 of 25: Western entrance at Franklin Street, curved masonry wall, and cast and wrought iron gate, facing east



Photograph 12 of 25: Sarah Davenport (1745) tablet carved by Thomas Johnson I, facing south



Photograph 13 of 25: The Theodosia Lloyd (1749) slate tablet, Boston School style, facing north



Photograph 14 of 25: The Hannah Weid (1797) sandstone tablet, facing south



Photograph 15 of 25: The Silas and Mary Davenport (1795) marble monument, facing south



Photograph 16 of 25: Theodosia Davenport (1810) marble tablet, facing south



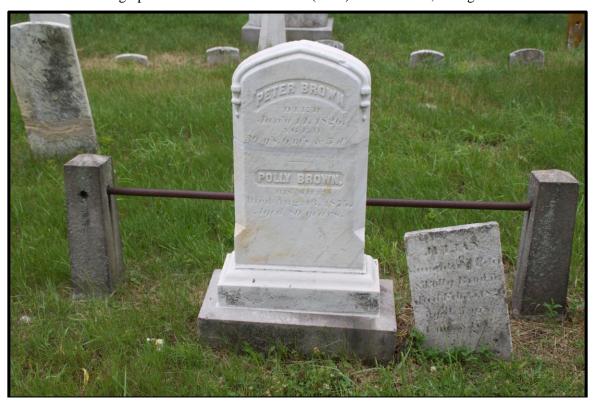
Photograph 17 of 25: Unknown table tomb, likely Abraham Davenport, (ca. 1789), soul-effigy motif and hourglass, facing south



Photograph 18 of 25: Unknown table tomb, likely Abraham Davenport (ca. 1789), urn motif, facing north



Photograph 19 of 25: Rebecca Almira (1841) marble tablet, facing north



Photograph 20 of 25: Peter and Polly Brown (1826-1875) marble monument, facing north



Photograph 21 of 25: Rossborough family monument (1858-1915), facing west



Photograph 22 of 25: Finch family monument (1882-1934), polished and unfinished granite, facing north



Photograph 23 of 25: The Ida Mae Barnes Vossler (1964) memorial, facing south



Photograph 24 of 25: Unknown Early American tablet, facing north



Photograph 25 of 25: Obelisk monument separated from pedestal, facing west